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ABSTRACT

This collection of short stories contains tales of a mythical animal called the "Tajar." Tajar tales are a tradition among campers who attend summer camps. The stories are to be read aloud, and approximate reading times for the stories are provided. Tajar looks something like a tiger, a jaguar, and a badger. He is a friendly, but mysterious animal. The titles of the stories are: (1) Meet the Tajar; (2) The Mattress Tale; (3) A Noise in the Kitchen; (4) A Perfect Day for the Tajar; (5) Waiting for the Tajar's Folly; (6) How the Tajar Learned to Dance; (7) The Day the Lost and Found Ran Away; (8) Magic in the Moonlight; (9) Mr. Fixit's Invisible Hammer; (10) A Tale of the Tracks; and (10) The Tajar's Birthday. (KS)

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A Perfect Day for the Tajar

And Nine More Stories

by Richard A. Brown

American Camping Association
Bradford Woods
5000 State Road 67 North
Martinsville, IN 46151-7902

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—— Cover and Illustrations by Tom Dougherty ——

FOREWORD

Twilight comes quietly along a lake's singing reflection. A campfire's orange embers match the sunset's glow behind distant purple mountains. Cool winds dance along high, rocky country, inviting rest for today.

Wherever we settle as evening shadows fall, we all need the unique humor and adventures of good ol' camp story to end our day's excitement. *Tajar Tales*—old and now a new version—take us into the fun of being ourselves and a chance to venture down camping trails with our friend the Tajar.

As a child the Tajar dances into your imagination and becomes real. As an adult he becomes a friend quoted in some of life's happy or rought moments.

So, whenever your campfire flickers memories for you to savor, these new stories of the Tajar by Richard Brown are here to accompany your experience. The Tajar and Richard have become good friends and have combined to share new delightful discoveries of camping adventures.

The Tajar will find a way to become *your* friend, and he will lead you into your own special moments of renewing the child within you—and others.

LENORE KEMPFER, GWYNN VALLEY COUNSELOR
AND FRIEND OF THE TAJAR

FROM THE AUTHOR

Thanks to Howie and Betty Boyd for their encouragement, Lenore Kempfer for her insight, Sandra Sue Handis for her Spanish pronunciation of the Tajar and Kay Moran and Sharen Garrett for listening. Many thanks to Beverly Ball and all the wonderful people at ACA for lunch on that fine, fall day.

Dedicated to Ann,
Who taught me about unconditional love
And all the friends of the Tajar
Throughout the world.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The stories in this book are intended to be read aloud. They can, of course, be read silently but the joy of the Tajar is best shared with a group of listeners. I first came to know the Tajar from listening to the stories at Camp Gwynn Valley in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. We listened to the stories in the evenings while sitting outside. The beautiful sky and the forest made an excellent stage for our imaginations. This book seeks to continue those traditions of the Tajar.

When reading aloud, the most important thing to remember is to speak slowly and clearly. Your audience has to be able to hear the words to enjoy the story. They will be more attentive and enjoy the story much more if you slow down and enjoy it yourself. Allow your listeners to get comfortable. That might mean stretching out on the floor or finding a better chair or even closing one's eyes. Falling asleep during a story is *not* an insult! Most of all, have fun. The characters in this book only come alive when the reader animates them.

The stories in this book do not need to be read consecutively. By reading the introduction before starting the stories, the scene is set for the Tajar. Any number of stories can be read and in any order, but remember to stop before your audience becomes bored. It's better to leave them wanting more. The reading times indicated in the table of contents are approximate and can be used for planning your reading.

The Tajar has been delighting readers for over sixty years, ever since Jane Shaw Ward first published her *Tajar Tales* in 1924. I hope you come to know and love the Tajar as I have.

RICHARD A. BROWN, TUCSON, ARIZONA, OCTOBER 1986

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Meet the Tajar

Of all the animals of the forests and the streams and lakes, there is none so curious as the Tajar. The Tajar lives in a very special place. He lives in an old tree somewhere near a camp. If you were to see the Tajar's Tree, it would look like all the other trees of the forest. But if you were to see the Tajar, you would know that he is something very special.

The Tajar looks a little something like a tiger and something like a jaguar and something like a badger, but he is different from all those animals. He would rather dance in the moonlight on a warm summer night than sleep in his tree. He might be sitting in a tree right now, listening to us talk. And if he were, he would be so quiet you couldn't hear him move.

But if you were to look around and see the Tajar sitting high in the limbs of a nearby tree, he would certainly look most curious. You might think he looks a little something like a tiger and something like a jaguar and something like a badger. But if you were to look away, you wouldn't be able to remember what the Tajar looks like.

The Tajar is a very nice fellow. He is always willing to listen to a story or help carry firewood or do anything you ask. But every now and then something strange

happens. When the moon is just right and the wind blows very slightly through the trees, the Tajar can become very full of folly. He will dance in the moonlight and swing through the trees by his tail, taking death-defying life-leaps.

Someday you may see the Tajar sitting very high in the tallest branches of his tree having tea. If you see the Tajar once, you will certainly forget what he looks like. If you see the Tajar twice, you may not remember what you forgot when you saw him. And if you see the Tajar three times, you will certainly forget that you forgot everything you remembered about the Tajar—except for one thing—you will surely become a friend of his. The more you try to remember, the more you will forget. And the more you forget, the more you will find that the Tajar is a most curious animal.

The Mattress Tale

ne morning several weeks after the last camper had gone home, the Tajar looked out his window to see a most unusual sight. There, spread out in every open place in camp, were all the mattresses from all the cabins. The Tajar looked again to make sure his eyes weren't playing tricks on him. It was mattress after mattress after mattress—all over camp.

After a quick breakfast, the Tajar made several death-defying life-leaps with his tail and landed on the nearest mattress. It was soft, springy and just the perfect thing for a little folly. The Tajar wondered if he could jump from mattress to mattress—without touching the ground —all the way to the Dining Hall. He bounced up and down a few times to get a feel for the mattresses and then took off.

The first jump wasn't very far and he made that easily. The next jump, however, was quite a bit farther and he almost, but not quite, had to touch the ground. From mattress to mattress the Tajar jumped and in no time flat made it right to the Dining Hall.

Next the Tajar pretended he was a grasshopper and hopped from mattress to mattress over to the Swimming

Place. This was great fun. Suddenly, the Tajar had a brilliant idea—what would happen if he piled five or six of the mattresses together and jumped on them?

By the time he piled them all together, the stack was about as tall as the Tajar. He climbed on top and tried a little jump. The Tajar bounced very high. He tried it again and went even higher. He tried once more and jumped very hard on the mattresses. This time he shot straight up and when he came down, he missed the mattresses completely and landed in a small mud puddle.

The Tajar stood up, a little dirty, but not hurt. "Now for some more folly," the Tajar said, and he jumped back over to the Dining Hall stepping on each mattress as he went. Next the Tajar stood the mattresses up on end and made a fort he could get in. He used other mattresses to make little passageways and then made his fort much larger.

After a long morning of jumping and playing with the mattresses, the Tajar found one mattress that was much softer than all the rest. He lay down on that very soft mattress and looked up at the clouds and trees. He felt so lucky to be at camp where everyone was so nice to him. They even put these mattresses out for him to play on. The Tajar noticed that some of the leaves on the trees were starting to change color and soon winter would be here. The days were getting shorter and the nights were cool.

In the sky the clouds still looked like summer. It reminded him of all the fun days at camp with all the boys and girls. The Tajar picked out shapes in the clouds that reminded him of mountains, birds, faces, and then he slowly fell off into a deep sleep.

The Tajar napped in the warm sunlight of late summer. He was resting very peacefully after a hard morning of playing.

"TAJAR!"

The poor Tajar was jolted out of his sleep. He sat up on his very soft mattress and saw Mrs. Camp Director standing over him. The Tajar knew he was in trouble.

"Tajar, Tajar," Mrs. Camp Director said. "You have made a mess of all these mattresses. Your dirty footprints are on each one!"

The Tajar looked and it was true. Each mattress had at least one set of dirty footprints on it and they were all his. After he fell into the mud puddle he had completely forgotten that his feet were still dirty. The Tajar felt very sorry.

"I didn't see the dirt," he said.

"Very well," Mrs. Camp Director said. "You have made a mess and now you must help me clean it up. Go to the Dining Hall and get a broom."

The Tajar found a broom leaning against the wall of the Dining Hall and brought it out. Mrs. Camp Director was still rather angry at the Tajar for all his folly.

"Tajar," she said, "you have certainly made a mess of this camp. These mattresses were put out here to be aired out—not for your fun. Now look, each mattress is dirty and the ones by the Swimming Place are all piled up. And what is that?"

Mrs. Camp Director was pointing to the Tajar's mattress fort.

"That?" the Tajar asked. He didn't really want to tell her what he had done because now he felt rather foolish for making such a mess. "Oh, that's just a fort I made."

"A fort?" she asked. "I would like to see this, just to inspect the mattresses for damage, you understand."

The Tajar took Mrs. Camp Director through the fort. He showed her each little room he had made by leaning the mattresses together and all the secret passages between the rooms. They decided to play hide-and-go-seek in the fort and the Tajar closed his eyes and counted to ten.

"Ready or not, here I come," the Tajar said.

He looked in each little room and down each hallway, but he couldn't seem to find Mrs. Camp Director. After several minutes of looking, the Tajar noticed a lump in one mattress.

"Is that you, Mrs. Camp Director?" the Tajar asked.

"Tajar, Tajar! Come quickly! It's starting to rain!"

The Tajar found his way to the outside of the fort. Mrs. Camp Director was standing there, and the Tajar didn't even have time to ask her where she had been hiding. The lump in the mattress certainly was not Mrs. Camp Director.

"It's going to rain, Tajar," she said. "We must get these mattresses indoors before it rains or they will all get wet. You start carrying the mattresses, and I will go find Mr. Camp Director and anybody else who can help."

Mrs. Camp Director was off in a flash and the Tajar wondered where he should start. The camp was covered with mattresses. He stacked up several mattresses and crawled underneath them. Balancing the mattresses on his head, the Tajar tried to stand up. It was very difficult. He hadn't even gotten to his knees when the mattresses and the Tajar fell over sideways into the dirt. Mrs. Camp Director wasn't going to like that.

The Tajar quickly piled up several other mattresses and again tried to balance them on his head. This time he got to his feet, but the mattresses were so floppy that the Tajar couldn't see where he was going. It looked like a pile of mattresses moving by themselves, toward the water (which is exactly where the Tajar was headed). He couldn't see where he was going and he was right at the water's edge.

"Tajar, Tajar!" Mr. Camp Director yelled.

The Tajar tried to turn to see who was calling to him, tripped on a rock and dumped all the mattresses over.

The good news is that the mattresses fell in the mud puddle. The bad news is that the Tajar fell in the water.

"Are you alright, Tajar?" Mr. Camp Director asked as he helped him out of the water.

"Yessir, Mr. Camp Director, sir," the Tajar said. "But I think I'm all wet."

"Yes, I think you are quite wet. But look Tajar, it's not raining anymore."

In all his hurry, the Tajar had not even noticed the sky. The clouds were all gone and there wasn't a hint of rain.

"It was just a little sprinkle," Mrs. Camp Director said. "But thank you for helping, Tajar."

"Well," Mr. Camp Director said, "I think we have a lot of work to do, Tajar. Mrs. Camp Director told me that you got several of the mattresses dirty. Is that right?"

"Yessir, Mr. Camp Director, sir," the Tajar said.

"This time your folly has certainly gone to your head," Mrs. Camp Director said. "But if we all pitch in and work, it shouldn't take much time to clean them up."

The three of them swept the dirt off the mattresses and picked up the ones that landed in the mud puddle. Then the Tajar showed Mr. Camp Director his fort and they played hide-and-go-seek until they were tired. Late in the afternoon they all three picked up the mattresses, one by one, and carried them to the cabins. In no time they were finished with the job.

"Thank you, Tajar," Mrs. Camp Director said. "With your help the job was much easier. Of course, your folly might have made the job a little longer, but I didn't mind."

"You're welcome," the Tajar said. "Now if you don't mind, I think I will go back to my tree and perhaps take a little nap before dinner."

The Tajar decided to walk back to his tree rather than swing through the branches making death-defying life-leaps. He was very tired after a long day and as the sun set, the Tajar looked up to see the beautiful, clear sky between the trees.

A Noise in the Kitchen

Early one morning the Tajar woke to the loudest racket he had ever heard. The loud crashing and banging seemed to be coming from the direction of the kitchen. The Tajar stuck his head out the door of his tree and tried to see what the problem was. He could just barely see someone in the kitchen wrestling with several pots and pans.

The Tajar put on his favorite baseball cap and made several death-defying life-leaps and landed right at the kitchen door.

"Is anyone there?" the Tajar asked—although he was sure there was somebody there by all the noise that was going on.

"Of course there's somebody here!" the person inside yelled.

"I'm sorry," the Tajar said. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Well, I think maybe you could."

The Tajar opened the screen door and there stood the Head Counselor with flour all over her face and egg shells on the floor and pots and pans scattered all over the kitchen.

"The cook is sick today," explained the Head Counselor. "And Mr. Camp Director is in town and Mrs. Camp Director is with him and the assistant cook has a day off and the assistant to the assistant cook is on a campout and the assistant to the assistant's assistant is assisting the third assistant cook on another campout and the Head Lifeguard has a bee sting and the Head Nurse is assisting the Head Lifeguard. That leaves only me to cook breakfast for all the campers."

The Tajar wondered what an assistant was.

"Of course, you know that an assistant is someone who helps," the Head Counselor said. "I would certainly like some help right now. Would you like to be my assistant?"

The Tajar didn't even have time to say yes. He put on an apron, rolled up his sleeves and went to work. First they made pancakes on a griddle the size of a ping pong table. The Tajar knew that he would need some special equipment to handle this job, so while the Head Counselor mixed the batter, the Tajar found a pair of roller skates. He put the skates on his feet and the Head Counselor poured out the pancakes on the huge griddle. The Tajar skated around and flipped the hot cakes—waiting until they were just golden brown. They finished that job just as the Tajar's feet were getting hot.

Next they decided to make scrambled eggs. The Head Counselor broke dozens of eggs in a very large pot while the Tajar swam back and forth to mix them up. It took several minutes, but soon the eggs were ready and the Tajar got out of the pot. He then realized that maybe the egg swim wasn't such a good idea. All of his fur was coated with egg. The Tajar was carrying a big block of cheese and a handful of mushrooms when he slipped and fell against the hot griddle.

"Help!" the Tajar yelled. "I'm turning into a giant omelette!"

The eggs and milk and cheese and mushrooms were starting to cook when the Head Counselor finally reached the Tajar and pulled him from the hot griddle.

"Tajar, Tajar," the Head Counselor said. "We must be more careful. You wouldn't be a very good assistant as an omelette."

The Tajar jumped in the sink and the Head Counselor ran cool water over him. It washed most of the egg off, and the Tajar felt much better. Lucky for him, the egg and milk and cheese and mushrooms kept him from getting burned when he fell against the hot griddle. Now, unfortunately, he didn't smell very good.

Next they made toast. The Tajar opened the packages of bread while the Head Counselor popped them in the toaster. With a paint brush dipped in butter and held in his tail, the Tajar coated each slice of toast.

Finally, they were all set. Breakfast was ready. The campers were just starting to come in and find their seats. No one took much notice of the little guy in the kitchen with the baseball cap pulled down over his eyes. He sure seemed to be awfully hairy, but the campers were hungry and didn't notice.

The campers ate the whole breakfast—pancakes, scrambled eggs and toast—and when the last plate had been scraped and the last table cleared, the Head Counselor stood up and said, "Campers, your breakfast was made possible with the help of my very special assistant. If it hadn't been for him, we might not have had this wonderful breakfast. At this time I would like my assistant to please come out of the kitchen."

Slowly, the Tajar stuck his head out of the kitchen door. He was very shy about the whole thing and kept his baseball cap pulled down over his eyes and tried to hide behind his apron.

The campers clapped very politely and the Tajar slipped back into the kitchen. He took off his apron and

then slipped out the back door.

"Did you see that assistant cook?" one of the campers asked another.

"Yes, but I don't remember what he looked like."

"I don't either," the camper said.

At another table the same conversation was going on.

"Could that have been the Tajar?" a counselor asked.

"It might have been," a younger camper said, "but he sure smelled funny."

By this time the Tajar was well on his way home. It did take him a few minutes longer because there was some egg in his fur that had dried out and the Tajar could barely walk, let alone leap from tree to tree. He spent the rest of the morning taking a nice, cool bath and reading a cookbook.

A Perfect Day for the Tajar

he Tajar woke up early one morning and looked out the window. Rain! It was cold and cloudy and rainy. The Tajar had only one thing to say about the day—YUCK!

He got back in bed and pulled the covers over his head. The last thing the Tajar wanted to do was to get up and face a rainy day. Perhaps, he thought, if he just stayed in bed for a few more minutes, the rain would stop and the sun would come out.

So the Tajar stayed in his bed and counted to twenty very slowly. He didn't know what else to do. It was too cold to play a game of cards in bed and he didn't feel like reading a book this early in the morning, so he just counted. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty.

The Tajar pulled back the covers and looked out the window again. It was still raining. Yuck. The Tajar pulled the covers over his head again and slid way down to the foot of his bed where it was still warm.

"This is no way to face a new day," the Tajar said out loud. "I'm going to get out of bed right now."

He pulled back the covers—and changed his mind. At least the bed was still warm and maybe he could get a lit-

tle more sleep. Of course, there was a lot of work to be done today, and the Tajar wanted to practice his death-defying life-leaps. Of course he was good at them, but sometimes he just needed an excuse to do them.

The Tajar snuggled in his bed and started thinking about what he would do on a perfect day. This day couldn't be perfect because it was raining; but if it was a perfect day, what would the Tajar do? The first thing he would do is get out of bed and do two push-ups and three and a half sit-ups. (Half a sit-up is just a little more work than lying on the floor.) Next, he would splash some water in his face and put the tea kettle on full boil for his morning tea.

On a truly perfect day, the Tajar would climb up very high in his tree and have tea in the Sitting Place up in the highest crook of the branches. The Sitting Place was a very special place for the Tajar. From there he could see the whole camp, and on a perfect day he would go up there just as the sun was rising. There was a perfect place to put his tea cup and even a space under the seat to store pencils, paper and a few crayons.

After tea the Tajar would have his breakfast and then spend a few minutes cleaning up his tree. Even on a perfect day the Tajar needed to wash dishes and sweep the floor and hang up bath towels. A little cleaning never hurt—even on a perfect day.

The Tajar started to think about all the fun things he could do inside his tree—without having to go outside and get wet. Could he have a perfect day even though it was raining outside? Yes! The Tajar threw back the covers and jumped out of bed. As soon as his feet hit the floor, he changed his mind again—but this time it was too late. The Tajar was out of bed and the covers were all over the floor. He was really up now.

The Tajar did exactly two push-ups and then did three and a half sit-ups. He felt better after his exercise. He

put on a housecoat and a pair of slippers to keep his feet warm. This was going to be a perfect day after all.

The Tajar splashed a little water in his face and then put the tea kettle on full boil to make his morning cup of tea. He lit a fire in his fireplace to warm the tree and decided that on this day he would have his tea in his easy chair next to the fireplace instead of the Sitting Place high up in the branches. It was still raining outside, but this didn't bother the Tajar. He was snug and warm in his tree.

He sat for a few minutes watching the fire and drinking tea out of his favorite tea cup. His feet were propped up on a footrest and the easy chair was so soft that he almost sank out of sight. Ah, this is the right way to start the day!

After tea the Tajar made himself a fine breakfast. He only made the things he liked to eat. Perhaps this day couldn't be perfect, but the Tajar was going to make it as good as possible. This time when he looked out the window and saw that it was raining harder, the Tajar only chuckled to himself.

Well, now the work began. There was a pile of dishes in the sink from last night and probably the night before. And as the Tajar walked from room to room in his tree, he realized that the whole place was a mess.

"Nothing to do, but do it," the Tajar said out loud.

He put on his apron and his dishwashing gloves. With one paw he washed the dishes while the other paw rinsed them. He used his tail to dry them and then stacked the dishes with his foot. He used his other foot to stand on. One time the Tajar tried to reach for a plate and almost, but not quite, lost his balance. He was able to steady himself by grabbing onto a dish towel with his mouth which kept him from falling over. But, the Tajar decided it was time to put that dish towel in the laundry.

With the dishes washed, dried and stacked, the Tajar

cleaned his tree from top to bottom. Naturally, he started at the top and pushed the dirt to the bottom. Since most trees are not nearly as wide as they are long, the Tajar's Tree had many floors to it and rather small rooms.

At the top of the tree was the Tajar's bedroom. He liked that room the best since it was high up in the tree and his windows were big and let in a lot of light. On a perfect day he could see quite a bit of the forest from his bedroom windows. And at night, the Tajar could see the moon rising and the stars coming out. On one wall was a bookcase full of the Tajar's favorite books. He had a closet for his clothes and a shelf for his games, and he even had a nightstand with a little lamp on it for reading. He kept his writing paper and pencils in a drawer, and he also kept his most favorite books right there on the nightstand.

The Tajar's bed was built right into the tree. He had a curtain he could pull which blocked out the light if he wanted to sleep late. But the most wonderful thing about the Tajar's Sleeping Place was the wall right next to the bed. It had so many little places to put things. There was a wonderful place to put a puzzle and the Tajar had a deck of cards on a perfect little shelf. His whole rock collection from the creek was lined up so the Tajar could say good night to them before he went to sleep.

This day, however, the Tajar was more concerned with cleaning than playing. He put all his dirty clothes in one pile and put back the books he had taken from the bookshelf. He put his crayons and pencils and paper back in the drawer on the nightstand and dusted off everything else. When he finished with the bedroom, the last thing the Tajar did was to put his dirty clothes in the clothes chute.

Down below the bedroom was the Tajar's hobby room and his library. Since the tree gets wider closer to

the ground, there's enough space for two rooms. To get down from the bedroom, there was an old spiral staircase.

The hobby room looked very clean. The Tajar dusted off his stamp collection and put away a puzzle he had started several weeks ago. He made sure the lids were on his paint cans good and tight and then put them all away, too. There were stacks of drawings here and there, but they looked clean enough and Tajar didn't move them.

This was a nice room, too, the Tajar thought. The windows were not as large as his bedroom windows, but he had plenty of room to spread out and do whatever he liked.

The Tajar kept the rest of his books in his library. He had a book for every occasion. On a truly perfect day the Tajar would come in and read a book after a busy morning of taking death-defying life-leaps. He had books about nature and books about cities and books about trees and books about rivers and even books about books. He had a book about dancing in the moonlight and a book about singing and lots and lots of story books. He even had a book about himself.

The Tajar decided that the library was clean enough. If he started cleaning he just might find a book that looked interesting to him and start reading.

Below the hobby room and the library was the Tajar's main floor with his kitchen, living room and dining room. The kitchen was in good order. The Tajar opened his ice box and found it to be very clean. All the pots and pans were hung over the stove and even the pot holders were clean. The Tajar checked his spice rack to make sure that it was full of spices. The Tajar finished his work in the kitchen by putting that awful tasting dish towel in the laundry.

The Tajar's living room was a very special place. He had a nice big fireplace for cool days like this, and on the

walls were lots of pictures. The Tajar kept his magazines next to his easy chair in a small magazine rack. Over in one corner was a desk the Tajar used for writing. He kept his dictionary and his address book on top of the desk.

The living room was probably the messiest room in the whole tree. The Tajar got a broom from the closet near the kitchen and swept the whole living room. He swept under his easy chair and under his desk and he even lifted up the rug and swept under there. There were magazines to be put back and tables to be dusted off, and the Tajar even went so far as to clean off his footstool.

At last the living room was clean.

The dining room was a rather simple room with just a table and some chairs in it. The door to the outside was in the dining room. After the Tajar took a minute to clean the glass in the door, he decided that he was finished with the dining room.

Below the main floor was the Tajar's exercise room and his game room. They were both clean—well, maybe not as clean as they could be, but the Tajar didn't want to move his games and the exercise room looked fine. These rooms were at the same level as the ground. Below them was the cellar.

The Tajar opened the clothes chute and took out his dirty laundry. He kept his washing machine and his sewing machine down there along with lots of other stuff he just didn't know what to do with. There was an old bicycle tire, a mop, a small jar full of rocks, a bundle of newspapers, a saw horse, a broken typewriter, a clock, a snow shovel, a lamp he was going to fix, a hubcap, six feet of rope, a smelly pair of boots, a box full of rubber bands, a hat with a feather in it, a screwdriver, a broken pencil, a door knob, a lawn mower, a dusty telescope, a calendar from last year, a bowling ball, a fishing pole, a bucket with a hole in it, two cases of bottles, a water

ski—and that was just the stuff on top.

"Nothing to throw out here," the Tajar said.

The whole tree was finally clean—from top to bottom. The Tajar went back up to his easy chair and sat down to take a rest from his chores. On a perfect day the Tajar would take a walk through the forest or maybe wade in the stream. But on this day the Tajar had to think of something he could do inside. He got out a piece of paper and started making a list of all the things he could do. After just a few minutes of thinking and writing, the list filled the whole page.

"I can't possibly do all these things," the Tajar said. "I think I'll start up in my hobby room."

On a top shelf, way in the back, the Tajar found an old fiddle that he had completely forgotten about and spent the rest of the morning playing silly tunes. As soon as he played the silliest tune he could think of, another one would come to mind and between the laughter, the Tajar played and played. He had to stop a few times and put some more wood on the fire to keep his tree warm, but each time the Tajar picked up his fiddle and played.

At lunch time, on a perfect day, the Tajar might have his lunch by the big rock near the Swimming Place. Of course, this wasn't a perfect day, but perhaps he could still eat there. The Tajar looked through a closet and found exactly what he needed—a bright red umbrella. He went to the kitchen and made himself a lunch, put it in a sack and set off for the big rock.

With an umbrella and a good pair of rain boots, the Tajar stayed dry. He ate his lunch on the rock and enjoyed every minute, even though the rain didn't let up one bit. On his way back to his tree, the Tajar even did a short dance. He found that it was as easy to dance in the rain as in the moonlight.

After lunch the Tajar found an interesting book and sat in front of his fireplace and read for a few minutes.

He propped his feet up on a footstool and after two or three pages, the Tajar took a nap. On a perfect day he would find a nice sunny spot in the forest and take a nap there.

When the Tajar woke up he read a few more pages in his book and then noticed that the rain had stopped. He looked out the window. It was still cloudy and cool, but the rain was over and the Tajar wanted to take a short walk before dinner.

Once outside, the Tajar looked up at his tree. It was a very good place to live. From the outside it looked like all the other trees in the forest. If you looked very carefully, you might have seen the small opening which was the door and you might have seen the windows near the top of the tree. The Tajar liked his tree because it was bigger on the inside than the outside. It had everything the Tajar needed.

As the Tajar stood outside looking at his tree, he suddenly realized that this had been a perfect day, too. Perfect days don't always have to be sunny. It can be a perfect day when it rains, and it can still be a perfect day when the rain stops.

The Tajar felt very happy. Today was a good day—a better day, a perfect day—and tomorrow was going to be a perfect day, too.

Waiting for the Tajar's Folly

When the Tajar woke up from his afternoon nap, he was very full of folly. He was usually full of folly anyway, but on this day he was extremely full of folly. He was so full of folly that he couldn't decide what to do. On a day like this he would think up an extra special trick to play on Mr. Camp Director or he might put on a very silly costume and talk to Mrs. Camp Director.

But the Tajar couldn't decide what to do.

When Mr. Camp Director saw the Tajar sitting on a rock, thinking, he knew the Tajar was full of folly. He knew it was only a matter of time before the Tajar got into some kind of trouble. He knew the Tajar was thinking up the most, the best, the biggest folly ever.

"The Tajar is thinking," Mr. Camp Director told the Head Nurse.

"It's the Tajar," the Head Nurse told Mrs. Camp Director. "He's thinking again."

"The Tajar is up to something," Mrs. Camp Director told the Head Lifeguard.

The Head Lifeguard finally found the Head Counselor. "The Tajar is going to pull a big trick on us. I think he's very full of folly."

Everyone was waiting for the Tajar to do something. Mr. Camp Director walked by the rock again, and this time the Tajar was gone.

"We must surprise him," Mr. Camp Director told everybody. "Quick, into my cabin."

They all waited inside Mr. Camp Director's cabin, thinking that the Tajar would be by soon. They waited and waited and waited. It was very quiet. They waited even more. After a very long time of waiting and standing, they started to get tired. Waiting for the Tajar to pull a trick was a lot of work.

"I know he's full of folly," Mr. Camp Director said, "and this time we're ready for him. He certainly won't play any tricks on us today."

"What kind of trick do you think he might pull?" asked the Head Lifeguard.

Everyone agreed that it could be anything. When the Tajar was that full of folly there was no telling what he might do. He might hang upside down in the window and make silly faces. He might sneak into Mr. Camp Director's cabin and tie all of his shoe laces together. He might knock at the door and then run away. And he might not do anything at all.

"He *has* pulled a trick on us," Mr. Camp Director said at last.

"What do you mean?" someone asked.

"While we were waiting for him to pull a trick, he did it," said Mr. Camp Director. "His trick was to make us think that he was going to pull a trick on us, even though he didn't actually do it. We've been standing here in the dark for a long time and there was no need. That was his trick!"

Everyone agreed that the Tajar had pulled his best trick yet.

Mr. Camp Director stuck his head out the window and said, "Tajar, Tajar! This time your folly has gone

too far," although he wasn't even sure the Tajar could hear him.

Somewhere out in the forest, high up in the trees, the Tajar smiled. He could hear Mr. Camp Director just fine.

How the Tajar Learned to Dance

Everybody knows that the Tajar loves to dance in the moonlight, but it wasn't so long ago that the Tajar didn't dance at all —not in the moonlight nor the sunlight nor the starlight nor the firelight. It wasn't that the Tajar didn't know how to dance, he just never thought about it. He was too busy with other things, and besides, the Tajar always had somebody to talk to in the forest.

One night after camp was over and the last camper was gone, the Tajar looked out the doorway of his tree. There was no one to talk to him. All the other animals in the forest were sleeping or busy with something else. Suddenly, the Tajar felt a little lonely.

He thought and thought, but he couldn't think of anyone to whom he could talk. Talking to a friend would certainly make him feel less lonely. At last the Tajar remembered that Mr. Camp Director was still in camp.

So the Tajar took several death-defying life-leaps and landed right at the window of Mr. Camp Director's cabin. Through the window the Tajar could see Mr. Camp Director working on some very important papers.

"Hello, Mr. Camp Director," the Tajar said.

"Hello, Tajar."

"Are you busy?"

Mr. Camp Director looked up from his papers. "Well, yes, I am. I'm sorry I can't talk to you right now. I'm working on some very important papers. Please come by some other time and we'll have tea together."

Well, the Tajar was not going to take no for an answer. He wanted to have some fun, and Mr. Camp Director would be the perfect person for a little fun.

The Tajar found a long, thin branch and took off all the leaves except for one leaf on the very end. Then he carefully and quietly stuck the branch through the window and tickled Mr. Camp Director's ear with the leaf on the end of the branch.

Of course, Mr. Camp Director thought it was just a fly, so he took a swat at it without looking up from his very important papers. The poor Tajar could barely keep himself from laughing out loud. Next, he took the branch and tickled Mr. Camp Director's neck.

Now Mr. Camp Director was angry. He stood up and grabbed a fly swatter. He thought he saw something move over by the window, so he took a mighty swat and the fly swatter smacked the Tajar right on the head! With that, the Tajar burst out laughing and howling and ended up rolling on the ground with laughter.

"Tajar, Tajar!" Mr. Camp Director said. "I'm very busy with these important papers and I don't have time for your folly."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Camp Director," the Tajar said between his laughs. "I only wanted to have a little fun."

Next, the Tajar went to the costume room to see if he could find anything interesting. In a few minutes there was a knock at Mr. Camp Director's door.

"Telegram for Mr. Camp Director."

Mr. Camp Director opened the door and saw a very strange sight standing in the doorway. The person holding the telegram was dressed in a purple suit with a very

tall hat and a green feather sticking out of the top. He had big black shoes that curled up at the ends. His shirt was red with white spots and he had a yellow tie that hung to the floor. On each hand was a glove that was too large for the hand under it.

"Who are you?" Mr. Camp Director asked.

"I have a telegram for Mr. Camp Director."

"A telegram? Oh, very well, let me see it."

Mr. Camp Director opened the envelope and read the note inside. It said:

> Greetings to you and a loud, mighty *boo,*
> I am the Tajar and the joke is on *you!*
> Signed, the Tajar

"Tajar, Tajar!" Mr. Camp Director said. "I am getting very angry with you. These papers are important and I must get them done. You are making it very difficult for me to do my work."

"I just want to have some fun," the Tajar said.

"Well, your fun is not my fun tonight," Mr. Camp Director said. "Can't you do anything else?"

"Everyone else is asleep or not at home. There's no one to talk with me," the Tajar said. Now he was feeling a little lonely again. It was clear that Mr. Camp Director had to do his work and didn't have time for any of the Tajar's fun.

"It's a beautiful moonlit night," Mr. Camp Director said. "Can't you find something to do that won't bother me and still be interesting to you?"

"No, I can't," the Tajar said. "I'm all alone with nobody to play with, and I'm getting very lonely."

With that, the Tajar turned and walked away. In his eyes the Tajar could feel two very small tears. They ran down his face and onto his nose.

"Tajar!" Mr. Camp Director yelled.

The Tajar turned around and almost started back to the cabin before he called out, "Yes?"

"Don't forget to hang those costumes up," Mr. Camp Director said.

"Oh," the Tajar said very sadly.

"Why don't you go chase fireflies?" Mr. Camp Director said and then closed his door.

The Tajar walked slowly to the costume room and hung up the costumes, although he would have rather thrown them on the floor. He felt sad. He felt very sad. He felt so very, very sad that when he realized how sad he felt, he felt even sadder. And it was getting worse. The more he realized that he was feeling sad, the sadder and sadder he felt until he got to the very last sad of the saddest feeling in the world. That was sad.

The Tajar looked up to see if there were any fireflies around. Indeed there were. He didn't really feel like chasing any, but he was curious to see what they looked like. So the Tajar ran after a firefly, but the fly was quick and darted around. The Tajar twisted and turned and jumped in mid-air trying to catch the little bug. The fly flew high and then flew very low. The Tajar jumped high and then stooped very low.

After a few minutes the Tajar remembered that he had been feeling sad. He wasn't sad now. In fact, he was laughing at himself. He thought about what he must look like, dancing around trying to catch a silly, little firefly. The more he danced, the better he felt. And the better he felt, the more he danced.

He pretended he was a firefly, jumping for the moon. Next he pretended that he was the moon, flying through the air in the night sky. He danced high and he danced low and he danced in the middle. He danced over a fallen log and on top of rocks and even through a little stream.

And then the Tajar realized that he had learned how to dance. He forgot all his troubles and just danced.

From that day forward, the Tajar knew what to do whenever he was just a little bit lonely. He would dance in the moonlight and dance and dance until his feet couldn't hold him up or until he laughed so much he had to stop. That night the Tajar learned how to dance and he still loves to dance in the moonlight.

The Day the Lost and Found Ran Away

It had been a very hot week at camp, and although it was only morning, this promised to be the hottest day of summer. Everybody, including the cooks, had gone swimming during the week. Even Mr. Camp Director took an hour out of his busy day to swim in the cool water. Everyone had gone swimming sometime during the week—except for the Tajar.

On this hot morning the Tajar was high up in the tallest branches of the tallest tree of the forest hoping to catch a little breeze to cool him off. But there was no breeze to be caught. And as far as the Tajar could see, there wasn't even a cloud in the sky. The other animals of the forest were already sitting in the shade sipping lemonade. It was a quiet, hot morning.

Just about noon, the Tajar decided it was time to take some action. He very carefully looked over the whole camp from his tall tree. Everybody was in the Dining Hall having lunch. There weren't any campers playing soccer or making pottery or playing in the woods. The Tajar put on his baseball cap and a t-shirt, grabbed his towel and swimming cap and made several death-defying life-leaps through the trees.

In the next moment the Tajar was right at the water's edge. Just being near the Swimming Place made the day seem a little more pleasant. The Tajar couldn't wait to get wet. He threw his t-shirt, towel and baseball cap on a nearby bench and then stuck his toe in the water—just to test it. It was perfect. The Tajar put his swimming cap on and carefully tucked his ears under the cap. At last the Tajar was all set. He took a few steps back, held his breath and charged full speed ahead into the water.

Ah, it felt so good! The Tajar swam back and forth and turned somersaults in the water and even did a handstand in the deep end. He floated on his back and blew water out of his mouth like a whale. He swam underwater like a fish and floated on top of the water like a log.

When the Tajar finally felt cooled off and just before he was too tired, he swam over to the edge to get out. Right before his eyes were a pair of shoes. And in those shoes was Mr. Camp Director.

"Tajar, Tajar," Mr. Camp Director said.

"Yessir?" the Tajar said in a rather meek voice. The Tajar had a sudden feeling that he was in trouble.

"Please come out of the water right now," Mr. Camp Director said. "This time your folly has gone too far!"

"Yessir," the Tajar said and pulled himself out of the water. He looked like a wet rug standing in front of Mr. Camp Director.

"Now then," Mr. Camp Director began, "I can understand why you would want to go swimming on such a hot day and I thank you for waiting till all the campers were at lunch, but even such a good swimmer as you should never swim alone."

"Oh," was all the Tajar could say.

"You should have asked someone to lifeguard while you were swimming. You have made a very serious mistake, Tajar," Mr. Camp Director said. "As a punish-

ment, you are confined to your tree for the rest of the day."

"Yessir," the Tajar said. He wasn't sure what confined meant, but he decided that it probably wasn't good.

"That means," Mr. Camp Director said, "that you must stay in your tree for the rest of the day."

"Yessir," and a very sad Tajar slowly walked back to his tree. Actually, being confined to his tree wasn't very much of a punishment because the Tajar had lots of books and games, and there was always some drawing paper somewhere in his tree. Of course he had been meaning to clean up his cellar, and this was a perfect time for that. He could also catch up on a few letters he wanted to write or just take a nap. Mr. Camp Director knew that the Tajar would have plenty to do in his tree, but he wanted the Tajar to know how dangerous it was to swim alone.

When the Tajar got to his tree, he suddenly realized that he had left his baseball cap, t-shirt and towel back at the Swimming Place. What could he do? He couldn't go back and get his things because Mr. Camp Director had confined him to his tree. But that was his favorite cap and how could he wash behind his ears before bed if he didn't have a towel to dry off? He didn't know what to do.

The Tajar paced back and forth in front of his tree trying to decide. He couldn't go back, and he couldn't just let his t-shirt, baseball cap and towel sit there. He needed them.

After a few minutes the Tajar climbed high up into a nearby tree so he could see the whole camp. Sure enough, the Head Lifeguard was picking up several things the campers (and the Tajar) had left near the water.

The Head Lifeguard gathered everything and took the armload of towels, t-shirts, shoes, belts, pants, hats, wash cloths, swimsuits, socks, robes and handkerchiefs

and dumped them in the big Lost and Found Box. The Tajar watched with a sunken feeling as he saw his favorite baseball cap get dumped in the box with a wet towel.

"Oh no," the Tajar said and checked the camp. The Head Lifeguard was going back to lunch, and there wasn't anybody else in sight. So the Tajar took several death-defying life-leaps and landed right in front of the Lost and Found Box. He started to look through the box for his baseball cap, towel and t-shirt. As the Tajar dug deeper in the box, he had to lean over and stand on his tip-toes to get to the bottom. As he reached for his hat near the bottom, the Tajar lost his balance and fell headlong into the Lost and Found Box.

"Okay, campers, come over here and sit down," the Tajar heard someone say.

From the Lost and Found Box the Tajar could hear the sounds of the campers as they gathered on the lawn. All the boys and girls and the counselors were there. No doubt Mr. Camp Director was standing right in front of the Lost and Found Box. The Tajar could hear the campers as they sat down on the soft grass and got quiet.

The Tajar slowly stuck his head out of the box—just enough for his eyes to see all the boys and girls sitting right in front of him. None of the campers seemed to notice, so he very slowly ducked back into the box. In order to hide himself better, the Tajar put on every shirt, every pair of pants, every hat, towel, sock and bath robe—until the Tajar was wearing the Lost and Found.

The Tajar's mind was working quickly. What should he do now? If he got out of the box and just walked away, Mr. Camp Director would be very upset with him. The Tajar was supposed to stay in his tree for the rest of the day as a punishment. Perhaps he could just stay in the box, wait until everybody went away, and then sneak back to his tree.

Mr. Camp Director cleared his throat. "Ahem. On a fine day like today, I am reminded of a story I heard when I was your age. Well, actually I might have been a little younger . . . or was I a little older? It's hard to say because I had forgotten this story for several years until I heard it again just the other day when a friend of mine . . ."

The Tajar knew he had a few more minutes to think because Mr. Camp Director might talk forever. And if he ever did remember the story, it certainly would take a long time to tell it. Suddenly, the Tajar heard Mr. Camp Director say, ". . . and that's the end of the story." At last! Now everybody would go away and the Tajar could sneak back to his tree and everything would be fine.

"And one more thing," Mr. Camp Director said, "before everybody gets up, let's dump out the Lost and Found Box and see if we can find the owners of this stuff."

As Mr. Camp Director picked up the box, a most curious thing happened. The pile of clothes in the box suddenly came alive and took off running for the forest. The campers sat stunned for a moment. They watched as the pile of Lost and Found clothes ran back and forth, tripped, got up and ran again. Whoever was under those clothes certainly couldn't see very well.

After the campers recovered from their surprise, they all got up and began chasing after the Lost and Found. Clothes were flying as everybody ran. Mr. Camp Director couldn't believe his eyes as he saw a shirt in a tree, a towel over in the grass, socks and shoes over there, several swimsuits in a bush, a sweater over here, and somebody's hat lying on a rock. The campers were picking up the clothing that belonged to them, and some were still chasing after the pile of clothes.

After everyone had claimed their clothing, Mr. Camp

Director decided he had better pay a visit to the Tajar's Tree. For the Tajar, the tree is just a couple of death-defying life-leaps away, but for someone walking it could take all afternoon. Finally, late in the afternoon, Mr. Camp Director found the Tajar's Tree.

"Tajar, Tajar!" Mr. Camp Director called.

In a few minutes, the Tajar stuck his head out of the door, yawned and said, "Yessir?"

"There you are, Tajar. I just wanted to tell you about a very curious thing that happened today," Mr. Camp Director said.

"Oh?" the Tajar asked.

"It seems that the pile of Lost and Found clothes got up and ran away, just as the campers were ready to claim them."

Suddenly the Tajar wasn't so sleepy.

"Do you think it was magic?" the Tajar asked.

"Well, that's possible," Mr. Camp Director said. "I'm certain it wasn't you because I confined you to your tree for the whole day, and I can see that I woke you from a nap."

"Yes, that's true, Mr. Camp Director . . . sir."

"Well, I'll let you get back to your nap now, Tajar," Mr. Camp Director said and then started to walk away. He turned back to the Tajar and said, "Oh, I almost forgot. All of the Lost and Found items were claimed except for one thing—this." And Mr. Camp Director held up the Tajar's baseball cap. "I'm glad you put your name on all your clothing, Tajar. That was a very wise thing to do."

Inside the cap was the name *Tajar* written in ink. Mr. Camp Director handed the Tajar's baseball cap to him.

"Thank you," the Tajar said in a rather meek voice.

"Perhaps it was magic," Mr. Camp Director said with a slight twinkle in his eye. "Perhaps it was."

Magic in the Moonlight

"Yoo—hooo," Mrs. Camp Director called to the Tajar one day while he was taking several death-defying life-leaps through the trees.

"Ta-a-a-a-jar! Yoo—hooooo!"

The Tajar was in mid-air when he heard his name being called and he turned his head to see who was calling. That was a mistake. He should have been watching where he was going. He missed the branch he was aiming for. In fact, he missed the tree completely and fell in a pile of leaves near a bush.

"Tajar! Tajar! Are you all right?" Mrs. Camp Director asked.

The Tajar got up and brushed himself off. He checked to see that all his arms and legs were still working. He wiggled his toes to be sure that none were broken. He swished his tail back and forth to make sure it was in order. He listened to make sure his ears were okay. He opened and closed his eyes to check for trouble, and he blew his nose to make sure it was still good.

"Everything's okay," the Tajar said. "I thought I heard someone calling my name while I was right in the middle of a death-defying life-leap. The next thing I

knew I landed on the ground."

"You must be more careful, Tajar," Mrs. Camp Director said. "It was me calling. I wanted to ask you to come to tea this afternoon when, of course, you get finished with your death-defying life-leaps."

"Thank you very much," the Tajar said. Having tea with Mrs. Camp Director was always fun. "I'll see you this afternoon."

Later that afternoon the Tajar put on his favorite baseball cap and went to visit Mrs. Camp Director. They sat outside under a big tree drinking the best tea the Tajar had ever had and eating chocolate chip cookies. It was a wonderful day for tea and cookies. They talked about the weather and they talked about their favorite cookies and they talked about swimming and they even talked about baseball.

Finally Mrs. Camp Director asked, "Tajar, do you believe in magic?"

The Tajar was quiet for a moment and then said, "Of course I do. As a matter of fact, I happen to be quite a magician. Once," he said with a slight twinkle in his eye, "I made a whole plate of chocolate chip cookies disappear.

"That's very interesting," Mrs. Camp Director said.

"What's more, I would like to perform some magic for you tonight," the Tajar said. "I will make your favorite tea cups take death-defying life-leaps through the trees by their handles—the same way I do."

"Well, I don't know," said Mrs. Camp Director. "I would certainly hate to have any of my favorite tea cups broken."

"You have nothing to fear," the Tajar said. "By tonight—with the help of my magic—they will be able to fly through the trees by themselves."

The Tajar took Mrs. Camp Director's favorite tea cups and went back to his tree. Inside the tree the Tajar

found a big ball of string and tied a piece to each handle. He worked for the rest of the afternoon putting string through the trees, over branches and around stumps until almost all the string was used. He tied all the ends together and when he pulled on the ends, it looked as if the tea cups were flying through the trees by their handles.

Of course they really weren't, but as it got darker the strings were harder to see and the Tajar thought that Mrs. Camp Director might be fooled.

After sunset, when Mrs. Camp Director got there, the Tajar told her to sit on a rock so she could see the trees. He pulled on the strings, and the tea cups began to take death-defying life-leaps through the trees by their handles—until something happened. The string holding Mrs. Camp Director's most favorite tea cup in the whole wide world broke. All the Tajar could do was to watch it fall. It seemed like it took forever to fall from the trees. The Tajar hoped that it would hit that same pile of leaves he had landed in earlier. It didn't.

With a thud, the extra special tea cup landed on the ground and then cracked in two and fell apart.

"Tajar, Tajar!" Mrs. Camp Director said.

"I guess that one forgot how to fly," the Tajar said in a rather meek voice.

"Tajar, this time your folly has gone too far," she said. "That was my most favorite tea cup and now it's broken in two. And look," she held up the string, "It was just a trick. It wasn't magic at all."

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Camp Director," the Tajar said. "I guess you're right. This time the folly has really gone to my head. I know there's no such thing as magic."

"Tajar! I'm angry with you for breaking my tea cup," she said. "After you take the rest of my tea cups down from the trees and untie the string from their handles,

I'll show you some real magic."

Very carefully, the Tajar untied all the tea cups and rolled the string back into a ball. He carried the rest of the tea cups as if they were made of egg shells and very gently gave them back to Mrs. Camp Director. In the meanwhile, she had glued the two halves of her most extra special favorite tea cup in the whole wide world back together. Even the Tajar couldn't tell that it had been broken.

"Hurry, Tajar," she said, "or we'll miss the magic."

They walked along a dark path listening to the sounds of the crickets and the owls. When they came to a big open place Mrs. Camp Director told the Tajar to sit down. They both sat and waited until the magic happened.

A beautiful full moon rose as they watched. The Tajar had never seen any moon look more beautiful than that. As it got higher and higher in the sky, it lit up all the trees of the forest with a silver glow. Everything looked so beautiful in the moonlight.

After a few moments Mrs. Camp Director said, "This is what I meant by magic, Tajar. To me, nature is the best magician of all. When I see a moon rise like this, I know it's not a trick. It's a very magical time for me and I'm glad that I was able to share it with you. When you broke my favorite tea cup I was angry with you, but then I realized that you are more important than a tea cup. You see, I can always glue any tea cup back together, but when I'm angry with a friend, it's harder to fix than a tea cup. Thank you for being my friend, Tajar."

The Tajar smiled and felt the magic of friendship

Mr. Fixit's Invisible Hammer

Whenever there was a leaky roof or a broken step or a loose board to be fixed, Mr. Camp Director would call his friend Mr. Fixit. Now Mr. Fixit was a wonderful man. He loved the camp and he enjoyed fixing things. Mr. Fixit was a nifty nailer. Mr. Fixit was a responsible roofer. Mr. Fixit was a perfect plumber. And just the sight of Mr. Fixit walking up the camp road with his toolbox brought so much folly to the Tajar that the Tajar would clap his hands in glee and hang from his tail making silly faces.

On this fine fall day, several weeks after all the campers had left, the Tajar looked down the camp road. Lo and behold, there was Mr. Fixit coming to the camp. The Tajar could feel all of his folly starting to run to his head as he clapped his hands in glee and hung from his tail making silly faces.

"Tajar, Tajar," said Mr. Camp Director.

The Tajar suddenly straightened up. "Yessir, Mr. Camp Director, sir," the Tajar said.

"Tajar, I would like you to help me carry a few boxes of very important papers."

"Yessir." The Tajar was disappointed. He was look-

ing forward to playing a few tricks on Mr. Fixit. The Tajar thought that perhaps Mr. Camp Director thought that the Tajar was thinking about what Mr. Camp Director was thinking and Mr. Camp Director might be thinking that whatever the Tajar's thoughts were about Mr. Fixit were—well, it would be better for the Tajar to help carry a few boxes.

The Tajar followed Mr. Camp Director to his cabin. A few boxes, indeed! The room was full of boxes. As soon as the Tajar saw the boxes he knew that Mr. Camp Director knew that the Tajar knew that there wouldn't be any time for folly on this day.

"These boxes go over here and those boxes go over there, and if these boxes look like those boxes," Mr. Camp Director said, "then they go over there unless those boxes are taller than these boxes which were under here, but are now up there. In that case, put these boxes back over here and leave those boxes back there. But if you find that those boxes belong with these boxes, then put those boxes right here and leave these boxes back there. Is that clear?"

"Yessir," the Tajar said although he had no idea what Mr. Camp Director had said.

"If you have any questions," Mr. Camp Director said, "you can find me at the stables."

The Tajar looked at the boxes and boxes of very important papers. It was impossible. The more he looked at them, the more he realized that there was nothing he could do. And then the Tajar realized that there *was* nothing to do. The way Mr. Camp Director had told him to move the boxes was exactly the way the boxes were right now. These were here and those were there. It was that simple.

The Tajar looked out the window and saw Mr. Camp Director talking with Mr. Fixit, pointing to windows that needed to be fixed and roofs that needed to be

patched and boards that needed to be nailed. When they finished talking Mr. Camp Director headed off for the stables.

The Tajar jumped out the window and quickly took several death-defying life-leaps through the trees and landed well ahead of Mr. Fixit at his first stop. He then hid behind a bush and waited.

Mr. Fixit was never in a big hurry. He enjoyed walking slowly and looking at the trees and flowers and sometimes he would even sing a little song to himself. He would make up the words as he walked along, and on this day he made up these words:

A leaky pipe or a broken screen,
I love to fix it all,
And when it comes to nailing boards,
I am the one to call.

I love to fix the little things,
That often end up broken,
And if I see a huge bee's nest,
I'm careful not to poke 'em.

When he got to his first stop Mr. Fixit put down his toolbox and took off his thick glasses to clean them. He put his glasses down on a stump while he searched through his pockets for a handkerchief. The Tajar was hiding behind a bush right next to the stump, and he quietly took the glasses. Mr. Fixit found his handkerchief and then reached for his glasses.

"Now where did I put them?" he asked when he couldn't find them. "I thought I put them right on this stump."

He looked next to the stump, he looked on the ground, he looked in his pocket, he looked in his toolbox, he looked under a rock—meanwhile, the Tajar quietly put

Mr. Fixit's glasses back on the stump.

"Well, there they are!" he said. "That's where I thought I put them. Now that's very odd."

His first job was to fix a loose board on a cabin. He took out his hammer from the toolbox and also set it on the stump. Again, the Tajar took it.

"Now where did I put that hammer?" Mr. Fixit asked himself when he turned around. He looked on the ground, he looked on the steps of the cabin, he looked back in his toolbox, he looked under a board, but he couldn't find it.

"Maybe I need to use a screwdriver," he said and got out two screwdrivers. "I'll also need a pair of pliers and perhaps a saw and, of course, a chisel and maybe a drill." He pulled them out of the tool box. He found a box of nails and put them on the stump.

The Tajar could barely keep from laughing as he took the box of nails and replaced the hammer on the stump.

"Ah, there's my hammer," Mr. Fixit said. "But what did I do with the pliers?" He looked on the stump, he looked on the ground, he looked in his toolbox and he finally found them in his pocket. (The Tajar didn't need to hide the pliers.)

"Now, where are the nails?"

The Tajar took the two screwdrivers and then took the hammer again. It was all the Tajar could do to keep from laughing out loud.

"Where is that hammer?" Mr. Fixit asked again. "It was right here a minute ago."

The Tajar put the nails back on the stump and put the hammer back in the toolbox.

"Ah ha! There's my hammer," Mr. Fixit said. "And my nails are right there. I guess I'm ready to start."

"Mr. Fixit!"

The Tajar looked up to see Mr. Camp Director walking toward the bush. The Tajar hid himself as best he

could and hoped that Mr. Camp Director wouldn't look behind the bush.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Camp Director," Mr. Fixit said.

Mr. Camp Director sat down on the stump and said, "I just wanted to stop by and see how things are going."

"Well," said Mr. Fixit, "some very strange things have been happening. Whenever I put a tool down it seems to disappear. I've spent all of my time looking for things. It's very strange."

"Hm," Mr. Camp Director said. "That sounds like some kind of folly to me. I think I'll check back at my cabin and see if everything is okay there."

As soon as Mr. Camp Director left, the Tajar quietly climbed a tree and made two or three very quick death-defying life-leaps through the trees back to the cabin. He jumped in the window and picked up a box just as Mr. Camp Director was coming through the door.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Camp Director, sir," the Tajar said.

"Hello, Tajar. I just wanted to be sure that you're not having any problems with these boxes of very important papers."

"No, sir, Mr. Camp Director, sir," the Tajar said. "It's a big job, but I'm not having any problems at all."

As soon as Mr. Camp director was gone the Tajar was swinging through the trees again back to Mr. Fixit. Mr. Fixit had finished nailing the loose board down and was now working on the roof. The Tajar hid behind the chimney and waited until Mr. Fixit's back was turned. He then snatched the hammer again.

"Now what did I do with that hammer?" he asked. As Mr. Fixit was looking around he saw the Tajar's tail sticking out from behind the chimney. "I see you, whoever you are, behind the chimney," Mr. Fixit said.

The Tajar knew he had to act fast. He was caught red-handed.

"You can see me?" the Tajar asked.

"I certainly can," said Mr. Fixit. "And you have my hammer in your hand."

"Well now," the Tajar said. "This is really a very amazing thing because I'm invisible."

The Tajar knew he wasn't invisible and he knew that Mr. Fixit probably knew that he wasn't invisible, but as long as the Tajar *said* he was invisible, perhaps he could fool Mr. Fixit.

"You're invisible?" Mr. Fixit said.

"I certainly am," the Tajar said, "and I think that you must be a very special person to be able to see me. Do you often see invisible things?"

"Well now, let me think," Mr. Fixit said. "Yes, I do. But this is the first time I've ever seen anything as curious as you. Are you sure that you're invisible?"

"Oh yes, very sure," the Tajar said even though he knew he wasn't. "As a matter of fact, I woke up this morning and couldn't even find myself some breakfast."

"That is invisible," Mr. Fixit said although he didn't really understand what the Tajar had said. "I've got to be getting back to work now, may I have my hammer back?"

"Certainly," the Tajar said with a straight face, but wanting to laugh. "But you must be very, very careful with it. You see," the Tajar whispered, "it's invisible, too."

"It is?" Mr. Fixit asked.

"Yes," said the Tajar. "If you put it down you may never be able to find it again."

"Oh," said Mr. Fixit. "Perhaps that's why I had such a hard time finding my tools. They all seemed to disappear now and then."

"You had better keep this hammer in your hand at all times," the Tajar said. "Well, good luck, Mr. Fixit. It's been nice seeing you."

"Yes, it was nice to see you," Mr. Fixit said, "although I didn't really see you because you're invisible, and everybody knows that you can't see invisible things."

As the Tajar was leaving he noticed that Mr. Fixit looked very, very confused holding the hammer in his hand, thinking that he couldn't see it. The Tajar went back to Mr. Camp Director's cabin and waited amid all the boxes. Soon the Tajar saw Mr. Fixit talking with Mr. Camp Director.

"Why are you carrying that hammer in your hand?" Mr. Camp Director asked.

"The strangest thing happened to me today," Mr. Fixit explained. "I saw this animal that was invisible. I don't remember what this animal looked like, but it was certainly invisible, and it told me that my hammer was invisible, too. If I put it down I'll never be able to find it."

But I can see your hammer," Mr. Camp Director said.

"You can?" asked Mr. Fixit. "Then you can see invisible things, too. You must be a very special person—just like me."

After they finished talking Mr. Camp Director came into his cabin and said, "Tajar, Tajar" very sternly.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Camp Director, sir. Did you have a nice afternoon down at the stables? I think these boxes are just the way you want them. These boxes are here and those boxes are there."

"Tajar, have you been up to any folly this afternoon?" Mr. Camp Director asked.

"Hm," the Tajar said. "This would be a good day for some folly since I've finished all the work you wanted me to do."

"Very well," said Mr. Camp Director. "But you haven't moved these boxes yet."

"Which boxes?" the Tajar asked.

"These right here," Mr. Camp Director said with a slight twinkle in his eye. "Maybe you can't see them. They're invisible."

A Tale of the Tracks

When the Tajar woke up it was very cold inside his tree. It had been a long time since the campers had left camp, and the Tajar almost couldn't remember what it was like to be hot. On this day it was cold.

The Tajar stretched and put on his slippers and housecoat and then went down the spiral staircase to his hobby room. It was too cold to spend any time there, so he went down the ladder to his living room and put several logs in the fireplace. As soon as the fire was going the tree became nice and warm.

Next he put a tea kettle on the stove and decided to start the day out with a nice, hot cup of tea in his favorite tea cup. Today he wouldn't drink his tea in the Sitting Place up in the branches of his tree. That was for summer. It was winter and too cold for that now. Today he would have his tea in his easy chair in front of the fireplace.

The Tajar was warming himself in front of the fireplace when he looked out the window and saw something special—*snow*. It was the first snowfall of winter, and it was still snowing! Big, soft flakes of snow were coming down. The Tajar stuck his head out the window and

several flakes stuck to his ears. No wonder it was so cold in his tree. He couldn't wait to get outside.

While the Tajar ate his breakfast he thought about how different the camp would look in snow. It had been so hot during the summer and now he could enjoy the cold.

As soon as he finished with breakfast the Tajar put on a pair of ear muffs and wrapped a scarf around his neck. It was fun to be *in* the cold—but not fun to *be* cold. He put a pair of mittens on and jumped out the door.

The Tajar stood for a few minutes in the forest. It was so quiet. He pretended that he could hear each little snow flake hitting the ground, but, of course, he couldn't. He could see his breath. It was cold, but the cold air felt good and made him want to jump around to stay warm. Snow—what a beautiful thing. Everything had a layer of white snow over it. The fence posts had little white caps on them. The rocks looked like bumps in the ground. The trees were outlined in white—leafless, but beautiful.

The Tajar found that he could take death-defying life-leaps through the trees with his tail even though it was snowing and the trees had snow on them. He had to stop every few minutes and brush the snow off. The whole forest looked so different.

The Tajar landed on the ground and started walking around looking at the trees and bushes covered with snow. He wasn't thinking about where he was going, he was just walking. Suddenly, he looked down at the ground and saw a pair of footprints that looked strange. They didn't look like any footprints the Tajar had seen before. He decided to follow them.

As the Tajar was walking along he tried to think what kind of animal would be making footprints like that. They just seemed to drop out of the sky. Perhaps it was some kind of bird. The Tajar couldn't think of any other

animal that could just drop out of the sky like that.

Suddenly, there were two sets of footprints. The Tajar stopped and looked around. This was very curious, indeed. The footprints were exactly the same. Whatever it was, there were two of them now. The Tajar really wanted to find this animal. An animal that could just appear from nowhere must be very special. The Tajar had many questions he wanted to ask this creature.

He followed the footprints again. No matter how fast he went, the Tajar couldn't seem to catch up with this animal. When the Tajar stopped he couldn't hear anything or see anything moving. The forest was silent and covered with snow.

Suddenly, there were three sets of tracks. How could he not hear them moving through the forest, the Tajar wondered. And where did they come from? The tracks would just suddenly appear. It didn't make sense. This animal is very mysterious, indeed!

Finally the Tajar was getting tired of walking. He paused and then decided that maybe he had better go back. There was no telling how far he had walked and still there wasn't any sign of those animals—except for the tracks.

When the Tajar turned around it all made sense. The tracks were his own! He was walking in a circle. Each time he got to the start of the circle, he saw more of his tracks and thought that another animal was ahead of him. He was following himself follow himself. It was the same forest, but with the snow it all looked so different.

The Tajar felt very silly and a little foolish for having made such a simple mistake. He was glad that he was alone because if anyone knew that he had walked in circles, the Tajar would have felt extremely silly and very foolish. He was getting cold now and decided to go back to his tree and warm up near the fireplace.

While the Tajar was sitting in his easy chair next to the fireplace, he thought about how different it felt during the winter. The days were shorter and the cold air was brisk. A mug of hot chocolate and a fireplace felt very good on a day like this. The Tajar liked feeling very cozy in his tree in the winter. Perhaps he would read a book this afternoon.

The Tajar's Birthday

The Tajar was having tea high up in the Sitting Place of his tree, and although it was still early morning, he could hear the campers rising. How he wished he could take several death-defying life-leaps and land right at the door of the Dining Hall. It would be so much fun to eat breakfast with the campers, the Tajar thought.

But Mr. Camp Director had told the Tajar many times that he was not allowed to do that. In fact, the only time the Tajar could be in sight was at night when he was allowed to dance in the moonlight. The rest of the time the Tajar had to stay out of sight and keep his folly to himself.

The Tajar sighed and had another cup of tea. The morning air was fresh, and from the Sitting Place the Tajar could see the whole camp. He decided that he was feeling just a little lonely—suddenly he remembered why. Tomorrow was his birthday. No one had mentioned anything to him about it. Perhaps everybody had forgotten that his birthday was coming or maybe it just wasn't important enough.

Suddenly the Tajar didn't feel like doing any folly all day. He almost, but not quite, felt like crying.

After his tea the Tajar went back inside his tree and made a small, simple breakfast. He still felt rather sad, and although he didn't feel like cleaning up, he did a little sweeping and put away a few books and picked up his dirty clothes that were lying on the floor. Housework never cheered him up, and it certainly didn't on this day.

He read his favorite book—but that didn't cheer him up. He looked at his rock collection. He sang a song. He painted a picture. He played his fiddle. He twiddled his thumbs. He wrote a letter. But nothing he could do would cheer him up at all. The more the Tajar tried to cheer himself up, the worse he felt.

Finally, after lunch, the Tajar decided that he could do no worse than to take a walk in the forest. The camp was quiet now, and the Tajar thought that the campers might still be at the Dining Hall.

A walk in the forest was a perfect thing for an afternoon like this. The Tajar could feel himself feeling better with each step. The birds were singing, and the sunlight made the forest look greener than ever. Normally the Tajar would be taking death-defying life-leaps through the trees with his tail, but a hike was just what the Tajar needed.

Suddenly the Tajar came into a clearing, and there stood Mr. Camp Director.

"Well, Tajar," Mr. Camp Director said, "I see you couldn't resist a hike in the forest today, either."

"Yessir, Mr. Camp Director, sir."

The Tajar started to feel sad again.

"I have many things to do today," Mr. Camp Director said, "but it's such a wonderful day that I wanted to take a short hike in the forest. Have you ever seen such a fine day, Tajar?"

"No, I don't think I have, " said the Tajar.

"Are you up to any folly today?"

"No, sir, Mr. Camp Director, sir," the Tajar said.

"Tajar," said Mr. Camp Director as he sat on the large rock near the path, "you seem a little sad today."

The Tajar certainly did feel sad. "Yessir, Mr. Camp Director, sir. Tomorrow is my birthday, and it's a very special day for me."

"You are quite right, Tajar! I had forgotten all about it. I'm so glad you reminded me. I would like you to come to my cabin tomorrow night after you finish dancing in the moonlight. We can have tea and some birthday cake."

"Thank you, Mr. Camp Director, sir," said the Tajar, "but I was hoping that I could have a party with the campers. They always have so much fun. Just this morning I heard them on their way to the Dining Hall, and I wished very much that I could have breakfast with them."

"I'm sorry, Tajar," said Mr. Camp Director. "You know that you are a most curious animal, and when the campers see you, they forget what you look like. If they see you twice they may not remember what they forgot when they saw you. And if they see you a third time, they will certainly become friends of yours, but they will forget to forget what they remembered, and you know how difficult that is. So, Tajar, having a party with the campers would not be a good idea."

Now the Tajar felt, oh, so very sad. Even a long walk in the forest couldn't cheer him up. He said good-bye to Mr. Camp Director and took a short cut back to the Big Rock by the Swimming Place. He could hear the campers laughing while they swam and enjoyed the cool water. The Tajar stayed behind the Big Rock until the last camper had left the Swimming Place. He put his feet in the water and even thought about taking a little swim, but since there wasn't a lifeguard he decided not to. After a few minutes of cooling his toes the Tajar took a death-defying life-leap at a tree and swung himself

around a branch. When he got close enough to another branch, he used his tail to swing himself again. In just a few minutes he was back at his tree.

The Tajar ended his day the same way he had begun by having a cup of tea high up in the branches of his tree. The Sitting Place was a perfect spot to watch the sun go down. Just as the sun was setting and the crickets were starting to sing the Tajar thought he heard someone far below on the ground. It sounded like Mr. Camp Director.

"Tajar, Tajar!" someone was calling.

The Tajar was down in one giant death-defying life-leap.

"I finally found your tree," Mr. Camp Director said. He was out of breath and very excited. "I have an idea for your birthday party. Actually, Mrs. Camp Director came up with the idea, and I think it sounds wonderful."

"Well, what is it? What is it?" the Tajar asked, also getting excited.

"We'll have a party in your honor, and all the campers will dress up in costumes. We'll sing and have a parade and even dance in the moonlight—all in your honor."

"But I still won't be able to be there," said the Tajar.

"Certainly you may. All you have to do is wear a costume, too. Then none of the campers will know it's you. As long as you keep your costume on they will think you are just another camper."

The next day the Tajar could hear the campers talking about the party as soon as they woke up. They went to the costume room to find all sorts of strange clothes and hats and funny shoes and coats and jackets. The Tajar spent the day making a costume so splendid that not even Mr. Camp Director would know who was behind the mask.

At last it was time for the Tajar's birthday party. Everyone was dressed in the strangest costumes the Tajar had ever seen. There were ballerinas and bullfighters

and monsters and plumbers and hobos and doctors and witches and flowers and magicians and electricians and crickets and cats and parrots and ferrets and weasels and measles. There were puppies and politicians and ponies and pigs and tea cups and tigers and tomatoes and tires. There were farmers and fishermen and frogs and fools and bugs and books and—of course, the Tajar.

The Tajar had a coat with feathers pasted on it and long, silly pants that were much too wide for him. He wore white gloves and huge shoes on his feet. Covering his head was a bird mask with a beak that was about the size of a watermelon. The Tajar was sure that not even Mr. Camp Director would know him.

As the party was starting a camper dressed as an elephant got up and said, "Welcome, one and all, to the Tajar's birthday party. Welcome to the Tajar Ball!"

With that, the party got underway. There was dancing and laughing and stories and singing, and everyone was having a wonderful time. The Tajar danced very hard and with so much glee that he thought it was better than dancing in the moonlight. He spent the rest of the night enjoying himself at the Tajar Ball.

A very tall person who looked a little like Mr. Camp Director came over to the Tajar and said, "What an interesting costume you have. Are you a bird?"

"Yes, I am," the Tajar said.

"How interesting," said the tall person. "A bird with a face like a tiger."

The Tajar suddenly realized that his mask had fallen off while he was dancing. All of the campers had seen his face, but because everyone was dressed so strangely, no one realized that it was the Tajar.

Finally the Tajar Ball was over. All the campers left, and just as the Tajar was getting ready to leave Mr. Camp Director walked up to him.

"Is that you, Tajar?" Mr. Camp Director asked.

"Yessir," Mr. Camp Director, sir!" the Tajar said.

"How did you like your party?"

"It was wonderful, " the Tajar said. "I'm so glad that I was able to be here with the campers. Do you think any of them saw me?"

"Oh, I don't think so," said Mr. Camp Director. "There certainly were some strange looking people here tonight. Did you see that bird with the face of a tiger?"

"Yes, I did," said the Tajar.

"That was a very good costume," said Mr. Camp Director with a slight twinkle in his eye. "It looked like something I've seen before, but I just couldn't remember what it was."

"Well," said the Tajar in a rather meek voice, "I've got to be going now. Good night, Mr. Camp Director."

"Good night," said Mr. Camp Director. "And happy birthday, Tajar."

A Perfect Day for the Tajar

And Nine More Stories

Tajar tales have long been a tradition among campers who attend summer camps across the country. The original *Tajar Tales* were published by the YWCA and written by Jane Shaw Ward and illustrated by Herman Lui Drucklieb. Since 1967, they have been published by the American Camping Association and older generations of campers have continued to purchase the originals for grandchildren and great grandchildren.

A Perfect Day for the Tajar is patterned on the Tajar tradition and continues the life and times of the original. The new tales are bound to add delight to those who already have met the Tajar and to charm new acquaintences.

About the Author

The author is as refreshing and delightful a person as is the Tajar. He describes himself as follows. "Richard A. Brown is a regular guy who currently lives in a small adobe house in Tucson, Arizona where he collects stamps, feathers, and eyeglasses. During his spare moments, he enjoys making mobiles and raising alfalfa sprouts. His academic achievements are unremarkable and he has never been asked to teach at a major university. Mr. Brown has worked at a variety of jobs and first became acquainted with *Tajar Tales* while working at Camp Gwynn Valley, North Carolina. His favorite sport is ping-pong. Mr. Brown is also an unrecognized amateur magician with an acute sense of hearing. He currently speaks no foreign languages. This is his second book."